

Allen Gentry  
Oral History  
November 16, 2011

CD #454

*Recorded and transcribed by Matthew Sandau as part of an Eagle Scout Project.*

Matthew: Mathew Sandau interviewing Brother Allen Gentry at the residence of his house November 16, 2011. We will be interviewing about his life in the places that he has lived and his impact in the area.

John: So what is your date of birth?

Allen: January 28, 1924

John: And where were you born at?

Allen: Fruita, Colorado, Mesa County. I don't know, I guess you know where that's at, you know where Grand Junction is?

John: Uh so what's the names of your family?

Allen: What?

John: What are your parents' names and your siblings?

Allen: Uh... my dad's name was Allen Franklin Gentry and my mother was Erma Gentry and then I had a sister Madeline, and a sister Wilda, and a brother Eldry and another brother Charles.

John: So are you the oldest?

Allen: I'm in the middle

John: And so did all your family come from Fruita?

Allen: Fruita yeah they was raised around Fruita

John: So uh what is unique or special about your background?

Allen: Oh I don't know what's so special about it (laughs). A lot of hard work in them days. You's kind of poor you didn't have much, wasn't much you could have in them days, wasn't much money in the world at that time.

Pam: And he worked a lot at gilsonite mines

Allen: Oh yeah

John: So what was life like back then when you were a kid?

Allen: Well it was really hard work and you know you didn't have all these sports that you have nowadays. And out there of course I went to school in that little town of Dragon and it was only 24 kids ya'know it was from first to the eighth grade. We didn't have much of any sports just what we had a ball team to get up ya'know play softball or something like that.

Pam: Well and then after the eighth grade didn't you go to--

Allen: Yeah but that comes on a little later I think they'll ask me.

John: Yeah so you said that you lived in in Fruita until the eighth grade?

Allen: Yeah well I lived in Fruita there to... That's where I was born and I...I didn't really live there I live at Whiskey Creek, Colorado. What I mean I was I was born there and my parents had that ranch at Whiskey Creek and uh when we used to live there and then I'd rode a horse from there to Dragon which was eight miles, rode it every day and uh you'd have to get up before daylight and wouldn't get home 'til after dark.. Take you two hours to ride it ya'know.

John: So uh do you have any special childhood memories?

Allen: Yeah this old Augasi he was an old Indian that come to Dragon there when I was going to school i's just four or five years old. And uh he uh run the Meeker Massacre and he had to wear dresses 'cause the bucks wouldn't let him, uh he runs the squaws ya'know so they made him wear dresses from then on. There he is dancing the Bear Dance with ol' Jimmy Green and he was scary. This is the store in Dragon he used to come in there for supplies from Bitter Creek, he used to ride a horse in there fifteen miles to buy groceries and go back.

Matthew: So this Augasi what type of...

Allen: He was a Ute. he's Ute tribe.

Pam: Tell them about him chasing you.

Allen: He uh ran with the squaws up there when they had the Meeker Massacre up at Meeker, he runs the squaws and so that's why they made him wear them dresses and he's got a dress on and a shawl but uh underneath that dress he had bib overalls (all laugh). Not many people knew that I've seen him several times. He had a sister that they both lived over in Bitter Creek and they both lived to be over a hundred years old. Yeah he used to chase me when I's only four or five years old I was scared to death of him and I'd run for the house whenever I'd see him (all laugh), yeah.

Pam: Didn't he chase you down the railroad tracks?

Allen: Oh yeah and he did across the trussles. I don't know if you know what a trussle is they got the ties and the space ya'know between them on a trussle where the train went. I couldn't run'em like them other kids I'd have to get down and crawl'em I wasn't very big yeah. Yeah, he'd chase me and then he chased me home one day and I had a bridal and he thought it was his and he chased me home and I threw it on the porch and my brother in-law come out and he showed him the bridal wasn't his and he went away and never said anymore.

John: So uh who were the important people in your life?

Allen: My mother and dad and then there was the Johnson kids and the Smith kids was all my age ya'know and an Indian boy by the name of Billy Dick now he was quite an artist he could draw a deer, an elk, horse anything he'd draw 'em he was quite a trip roper and trick rider, I was just small and they's all bigger ya'know and I kinda looked up to them.

Matthew: So these smith boys I guess were they your neighbors or...

Allen: Yeah they was neighbors ranchers there they lived just acrossed the creek from me there when we went to school. Yeah there was Alfred Smith and Clifton Johnson, this Billy Dick oh and there's a couple a three others that went to school there. We didn't have very many in that school.

John: So uh growing up what were your interests?

Allen: Oh well when I's growing up all I can think about is ridin' a horse and cows

John: Did a lot of that?

Allen: Yeah did a lot of that, yeah we had a lot of cows. Dad he was always working cattle.

John: So what kind of animals did you have?

Allen: Oh we had cows, and then we had horses, dogs and chickens and milk cows, we had to to milk cows too I used to milk cows when I was four years old I wasn't getting much milk.

John: So uh what other kinds of work and chores did you have to do?

Allen: Oh you know that's all we had just to feeding, that's about all we did was feed horses and.

Pam: You did hay.

Allen: What?

Pam: You did hay.

Allen: Well yeah fed hay and fed grain to the horses and the pigs and the chickens and stuff like that, that's about all we had out there.

Pam: But you put up hay.

Allen: Oh yeah but that wasn't...

Pam: Well that's a chore.

Allen: Well that was work (all laugh).

John: So uh what was school like back then?

Allen: Oh it was uh ya'know just a you had one teacher for the eighth grades and then it was kinda hard 'cause they had a hard time getting around to all of ya, ya'know the teacher did but. We had one teacher from Vernal, Mrs. Rodabeck, here that was... she was pretty rough, she pretty hard teacher, she made ya toe the mark and get your homework done and your schoolwork done yep before you left school, you didn't do any homework, you done it there before you left yep.

Matthew: So what kind of a school house did you go to was it a one room or...

Allen: It had two rooms in it uh but uh ya'know before my time they had two uh they went from the first to the fifth and then from the fifth uh well first to the fourth and then fifth to the eighth in the other room but when I would come along there wasn't enough kids so they just combined 'em all and just went in one room yeah yep. Yeah it was a different school then you boys go to (laughs). Yep, I...I rode a horse there up to well up to about the fourth grade and then my sister got married an then I went to uh she lived in our house there at Dragon so I stayed with her and uh during the week an went to school then my dad he'd come and get me on the weekends uh he'd meet me with a horse and we'd go back to the ranch an I'd stay there 'til Monday morning then I'd ride back to school Monday morning and tie the reins to the horn and send my horse home he'd go home yeah he'd just go home yeah he a pretty good ol' horse. Yeah it was a different life out in them days. We had uh I don't know, I think she was a Stag girl, young Stag girl, Miss Stag she was just outa college an she come out there and taught September - 20<sup>th</sup> of May, she's a good teacher.

John: So um in school what did you like to learn about?

Allen: I liked Arithmetic 'bout the best of anything yeah it was Geography was alright but I (laughs) yep

John: So um do you have any poems or songs that you...

Allen: Uh I always liked *Home on the Range*

John: Home on the Range

Allen: Yeah... seemed like it went with ranching (laughs) yeah

John: So uh when you were grown up what did you hope to be?

Allen: Well I hoped to take over the ranch someday yeah and we did. We run about a thousand head of cows and we had... I had a brother that helped me 'til he passed away in the 80's. Then we kept it I don't know my wife and I we kept it an we run it fer two or three years an then we finally sold out an come here. An I when ta driving bus fer Wilkins bus line an makin' a lot of tours over for them useta do a lot of church tours going to Nauvoo an up ta Martins Cove. Uh.. lot of them a lot of the temples Provo there fer two weeks before this temple was built.

John: So uh do you have any funny school related memories or?

Allen: Not really (laughs) uh uh. Just the ol' ya'know my dad was a saddle maker and he made saddles and all the Indians useta come and they'd all get him to work on their saddles for them when they'd break down or break somethin' on he'd have ta repair them. They always come to our house ya'know and they was always around there. They was couldn't talk English very much ya'know them days but a he could understand them but I couldn't but it was quite an interesting ya'know ta be around them, they're purty good people yep.

John: So uh who were your favorite class mates?

Allen: Oh there was Alfred Smith and Clifton Johnson and Billy Dick he was the Indian boy but he you know he was a really talented and he could really do about anything but he got that Tuberculosis and he died at nineteen. There's the old hotel in Dragon it was quite a hotel they tell me but it burned up, it wasn't there when I's a kid. But a Dragon was uh in Uintah County ya'know.

John: So um when did you graduate then or?

Allen: I got outa the eighth grade there in Dragon then I went to Westwood, California, I was up in northern California and went to high school and I graduated from high school in '43

John: '43

Allen: Mhh hm

John: So you said you attended high school where in California?

Allen: Westwood

John: Westwood?

Allen: Mmh hmm

John: And that was from the ninth to the twelfth grade

Allen: Ninth to the twelfth uhuh. Yeah, you know where Reno is in Nevada and it's just about 120 miles south and west from Reno just over the California line mhm.

John: So, um...what, what kind of things were you interested in?

Alan: Oh, I played all sports and that. They had, at that time you know, uh, they was having a hard time getting people to work. 'Cause they took all the young fellers to the war. That was World War II you know, and they took them all to war. And uh, so, you could get a job any place. In the sawmill, they made the Venetian blinds. They made all kinds of plywood. All kinds of plywood. All kinds of 2x4's, 2x12's, everything you kno. And it was one of the biggest sawmills in the world at that time. It was a big thing. It employed 2,000 people in the mill itself besides all the loggers an' truckers, and all the other help.

John: So, um did you like collect anything or?

Allen: Oh, I used to collect arrowheads. I liked to collect arrowheads. Yeah, I have a few out there. Yea, I like to collect arrowheads and railroad spikes.

John: Uh, what, what, what other responsibilities did you have in your home, your community?

Allen: Oh, we, I had to do the chores and I had to deliver milk ya'know. My dad used to milk cows and I'd to deliver quarts of milk all over town, which wasn't very big there in Dragon. I only delivered, I think, five or six bottles of milk. I delivered them in the evenings and that. And he delivered them over the hills to the café. Yea, it was a different life!

John: So, um, what kind of books did you like to read?

Allen: I liked all sporting magazines and all western books and I liked to read and. Did you ever read the White Indian Boy? That was a good book. It was really neat. I liked it.

John: So, um, what did you enjoy doing in your younger years?

Allen: Oh, I enjoyed camping and horseback riding, hunting and fishing. We had a fishing pond and we. Fishing and hunting, just all that kind of stuff like a kid does.

John: Yup, Um, what kinds of extracurricular activities do you, did you do?

Allen: Do I do now, or then?

John: Yeah, then.

Allen: Then? Well, that was about it.

John: Yeah.

Allen: Uhuh.

John: So a, how, how old were you when you left home?

Allen: Oh, I was married in '45. Of course, you know I never did really leave home. I was out there and I just took my wife and went to the ranch. And that's where we stayed.

John: And so, what, what kind of goals did you pursue? Just kind of working the ranch?

Allen: Yeah just working on the ranch. And, that's about it I guess.

John: Um, what were, what were some of the challenges that you had around then?

Allen: Oh, the weather. We'd have bad winters and dry summers, and droughts you know and stuff. You had to fight the elements a lot. Yup.

John: So, what were some of the triumphs that you've experienced?

Allen: Oh, a, I can't think of any.

John: Um.

Allen: I had a pretty good life out there.

Pam: Hard one.

Allen: Yea, it was hard, but it was a good life. Good clean life.

John: How did you like serve, serve other people around?

Allen: Ya, I liked to serve other people. We used to, you know we lived so far out and peopled would come through there and they'd get stranded so we'd have to put them up for the night and feed them and take care of them until we'd get them out of there. Sometimes we'd be in the mud and snow and rain and stuff ya'know. So, we took care of a lot of people.

Matthew: Do you remember any, anyone in particular who you helped?

Allen: Yeah, This here uh lady from England. She come up there and she got off in the bar pit and we couldn't, couldn't get out so we drove her over the pass on the other side. And they went on. And then, oh, I don't know, uh a year later there come a, a postcard from her ya'know. And she didn't know my address here in Vernal. So, she'd put it to Baxter Pass. Ya'know, to the rancher on Baxter Pass. And nobody knew where that was, so it took a year to get to me. Finally got to Bonanza where they had the post office. And ol' Dick, uh, or I mean Dave uh, Dave, Dave Davis wasn't it? Yeah, Dave Davis he, he knew me so he brought it up to me. So, that was quite an experience with her. That was quite a treacherous road when it was slick. There was a lot of mud, there was a couple that come up from Grand Junction. This here lady and them run

the sporting goods store there in Grand Junction. We always used to go in there and buy stuff and talk and that. And they come up and was fishing and it started rainin'. And she would go back over the pass so he had to come plum out to Bonanza, go over to Rangely and over to Douglass to take her home, because she wouldn't go back over the pass. She was scared to death.

Pam: It was steep.

Allen: Hum?

Pam: It was steep.

Allen: What they done. They took the old railroad out you know. And they took all the ties off of it. And then the just graded it and that's where the rail, that's where the road was. On that old railroad track and it wasn't very wide. The kids never did like it (all laughs).

John: So, Uh, when did you first fall in love?

Allen: Oh (laughing), I guess '44 probably, 1944 we uh, we bought a piece of the ranch out there another piece that uh went with it. And uh, we uh, bought some cows here in Vernal. And had Wilkin's Truck Line haul them out. And I got to going with their mother. Yeah, '44 we was married I think in May '45, Yeah.

John: And so what, so what was your courtship like?

Allen: It was far and few between when we lived that far 90 miles out. (Laughs) I didn't get here too often. I'd come in every a maybe, once a month or twice a month you know. And that's about all I got in here. Especially in the winter time when it was bad. Summer time I'd get in. But of course peoples married.

John: So, after you were married what, what was life like as a young couple?

Allen: It was hard. Velda, she wasn't used to living out that far you know. So, she had a hard time adjusting, but she done it. She finally got to where she liked it.

John: Um, when did you have children?

Allen: We had uh our first one in a '47 I guess. We was married in '45 and had in '47.

Matthew: And your children's names?

Allen: Sandra, and Janet, and Pam and Debora. You know Debora.

John: Yeah.

Allen: She's the youngest.

John: So uh, what close friends did you have around then?



Allen: Close friends? Well, we had uh the Smiths, and Hills and uh Brewers and there was some Robertsons. There wasn't many out there, but we had a few. They was usually about twenty miles away. We, we all got together and had a 4th of July picnic and a 24th of July picnic there at the ranch.

John: So what kinds of special rewards or special recognition, recognition have you received?

Allen: Well I lettered in all sports in I went to school. Baseball, Football, Basketball, and I try I ran track a little bit but I quit because, I could get a job you know there were jobs just an opening, so I quit and went to work.

John: So um what, what kinds of strengths did you show in the, at home or work?

Allen: What kind of strengths?

John: Yeah

Allen: Boy I don't know

Pam: Well he was good at baseball. And you were good at basketball

Allen: That doesn't mean the home.

Pam: Oh in the home.

John: Home work or work, work place

Allen: Oh I, I like to work wood. I done a lot of woodwork and lot of leather work. And made, made quite a bit of saddles and that stuff. I like that.

John: So, um, what, what kinds of talents and skills have you acquired, umm, as an adult?

Allen: As an adult?

John: Yeah.

Allen: Well I don't think I did (all laugh). I ya'know I uh, I went to drive a bus. Ya'know, that's quite a skill to learn to drive them big buses through Chicago and New York round and round ya'know Nauvoo. And we used to go da California, ah, we'd go down to the Oakland Temple and a Los Angeles and a San Diego and hit them all. And it was quite a challenge to drive that old bus.

John: So we, we already talked about a little what, what kind of work did you do? Like at the mill, what did you do there?

Allen: At the mill?

John: Umhum.

Allen: I, I just worked at the Venetian and blinds, and cleaning them off there, and a shove'n them through the Kills to dry so they could spray 'em, paint 'em. And then I would, I worked in the box factory and they made boxes to a put a, send them to Southern California and put the apples and oranges and stuff in them boxes. That was before your time they didn't have baseboard box on them, they had old wooden boxes. So yeah, so they made lots of boxes there. Yeah.

John: And then after that, you said you were a bus, a bus driver for how long?

Allen: Oh I drove for fifteen years I guess, I guess that was about it. Um something like that. For Wilkins bus line, I used to go help them and, Wayne my brother-in-law, we'd a made lots of trips down Florida and down to Houston, Texas, and across, and up in Boston and Chicago, up in there with him. And with Todd I'd done the same with him. Todd n, do any of you know Todd Wilkins. Owns yeah, yep.

John: So um, what, what are some of your favorite stories or memories from your, from then?

Allen: From that?

John: Yeah

Allen: Well you know uh I liked when we got to the Sacred Grove and we went through that. And we went from there, when through the Sacred Grove there and I took mother and there. And went from there on over to Hill Cumorah. And looked at the pageant and yep, she couldn't walk up the hill so we had to, they had a road that took you up on top the Hill Cumorah, you can drive around. So I took her around she couldn't walk up the hill, but we walked up the hill a lot of us. But I took her around and put her on top, you can take the bus plum around. It was a neat experience, and the pageant was great. We stopped there at Nauvoo and went to the temple in the temple after they got it redone. and that, later on we had a lot of good experiences going with the church and a we used to haul a lot of a, I don't know if you guys ever went, but we hauled a lot of the youth from here to a Martins Cove several times. Did you guys go with a Wilkins bus?

Matthew: I, I know I did.

John: Yeah

Allen: You did, well this was before your time, but I 'I've drove them several years to Nauvoo and then to Martin's Cove and round.

John: So uh where's uh where's your fav, where's your favorite place to a visit?

Allen: You know, I like Cody Wyoming, Cody Wyoming has a lot of uh antique guns and a lot of antique stores. A lot of antique stuff there, Neat place, I'd go back there every chance I get. It was a pretty nice place. Not very big but it sure got a lot of stuff.

John: So uh. What what kind of holiday traditions carried over from your childhood.

Allen: Well Christmas and Thanksgiving, New Years. All them just the same as always you know. We still haven't what we planned (Laughs) yeah.

John: So have you had any adventures as an adult? Anything exciting?

Allen: Not really (Laughing) no.

Pam: Everything was exciting.

Allen: Yeah, I don't know I, I wrote some things down but I what, what are we at.

John: Let's see third page.

Allen: Well we had the family reunions and then we always had a ranch reunion out there on the fourth and the twenty fourth. We had a lot of people come from here even that were just, they just came out on the fourth and the twenty fourth. But they weren't ranchers lot of them came out all the Wilkins bunch and the other Southams, the Walkers and the different people Bonanza and all.

John: So uh what what strengths do you have as a parent?

Allen: I don't know what strength I got (laughing) I know it's hard to keep going but yeah you just find strength to keep going yeah.

John: So uh what what do you enjoy most about being a parent?

Allen: Oh I like my kids and my grandkids to come and a see them and have them come. It's neat, Yeah it's neat to have the family come around.

John: So uh. What was life like while you were raising your family?

Allen: You know while rasin' a family my wife, she had to do it. I was at the ranch most the time. You know. And she raised the family. And she'd done a good job. I would, I would get in, like I said, once or twice a month until the summer time then I would take them all back to the ranch. It was nice having them there you know. Rasin them yep it was a good life.

John: So uh what kind of things do you enjoy doing with your family?

Allen: Oh I enjoy goin' huntin' and fishin' and we go campin' and we spent a little time with her down in St. George. She's got a home down there and we'd go down there and spend some, a lot

of the cold part of the winter, so yeah it's neat. Yeah her and the other girls, Cris and Deborah come yep

John: So uh, what do you think about being a grandparent?

Allen: It's great! You can send 'em home when you want to(all laugh).

Allen: It's great; yeah I think I've got, what 21 grandkids er, great grandkids and 11 grandkids 21 great grandkids yeah.

John: So uh, what are some of your fond memories?

Allen: Oh, you know, like I said I really liked that when we went to the sacred grove and Nauvoo and uh, all them places back there and see where the church started. And one good experience I had we hauled a family from Roosevelt, the Evans family, and we took them to Nauvoo and while we was there at Nauvoo that girl turned 8, so they baptized her in the Mississippi river there. So it was a pretty good experience there. They had, they had uh, oh they all had sleeping bags and stuff and they all had to stay, they slept on the floor. of course we had to go across the river to another town to stay cause we couldn't get no rooms, in the bus garage, so we had to go across the. But we had that whole family, it was a neat trip. And she was baptized and they... we went through the temple there and stuff, it was neat. Good times.

John: So, what are some of the things you enjoy most in life?

Allen: Oh I enjoy, going with my family and doing things with them and uh, I enjoy huntin' with the great grandkids, they like to hunt and stuff, of course I know all the Book Cliffs real well you know, and I lived there all my life so we have a good time and we go campin' and just have a great time.

John: So, what things make you proud of your posterity?

Allen: Oh what the kids has accomplished? what they done for themselves they've all done real good and the girls have married good and they've got good families and that and what they've accomplished does really make you proud of 'em.

John: So uhm, what was Vernal like?

Allen: What was Vernal like?

John: Yeah:

Allen: Well when I first come here when I was what I guess about eight years old, Vernal was just a dirt road up the middle, and that doughboy you remember? The one that's down there at the courthouse, it sat the middle of the, right between the two banks, you know? Right there and you drove around it, but it was all dirt road and uh, there was just Ashton's and Penney's and uh, then uh the Hemstreet had a Chevrolet garage up where the bowling alley is at, and then they had

a creamery across the street from that and, there wasn't much to Vernal then. Nope it was pretty small then, but it was nice.

Matthew: How has it grown since?

Allen: Oh boy it has grown hasn't it? (all laugh)

Allen: Yeah Cris was telling me it was 35 thousand in the county, in the county in the city yeah. So that's quite a growth, yeah, when I was married there was on that street there I don't think uh, there mighta been a dozen houses on that streets where she lived and uh it was one of the main streets. It was the one that come, it was Vernal Avenue ya'know. And but there wasn't many people here then, there was an old barber shop there, a feller by the name of Alvin Weaks, that's where I'd head for every time I'd come to town, cause my hair was really long, hadn't been to town for months so I would head to there and get my haircut and stuff. He had a girl that, I never did go with her, he tried to get me to go with her but I never did go with her I don't know why, but I never did go with her. And Vernal had two theaters in there one where that uh, ones where the old theater is, and then the one across the street there from the, from the Cobble Rock park across there was a theater, and that's, they had them two show houses. And they had the big, Imperial Hall down there on the corner, uh there's the big slab there yet but nothings on it, you know where the bank is? uh Zion's Bank and you come down the street and there's that vacant lot right there, yeah that's where the ol' Imperial Hall was and they used to roller skate and dance there, they roller skated there alot but, and that, but they tore it down, I don't know why it was a really nice floor to roller skate on it was on springs kinda and it really was nice but they tore it down, I don't know why but they sure did. But Vernal was a nice little place and it was just small ya'know. Yeah you kids didn't get to see it (all laugh).

Allen: I don't now uh, I don't know whether you can see that, where is that doughboy? Is that one one? Is that picture right down there, I don't know.

Pam: Right here?

Allen: Yeah you guys come down here and look.

Pam: The one in the middle?

Allen: Yeah, this was in the middle of the two banks. See where he, that was?

Pam: They called that a doughboy?

Allen: Well, that's, yeah I don't know what they called him but that's what I called him. But that was the bank there and then Penney's over here you see, and they circled there and then the Hemstreets garage was up the way a little bit, Chevrolet garage, the only garage in town at that time. But that's quite an old picture I don't know if you've seen it maybe you've seen it

John: Uhm, I think I've seen a, it might be that one that I've seen

Allen: And this was Dragon where I went to school, this here. and then that lake up there's up at the ranch where we had the lake and the railroad went up through it and this was going up the pass here, And then this was the old Dragon town. And this here's part of it. Yep if you get out there you'll have to go over Baxter it's, everyone thinks it's quite a trip.

Matthew: So, last and final question, what kind of a legacy does you think you've created?

Allen: Oh I don't know (laughs) I don't know, you guess

Matthew: Well, a mighty fine one that's for sure

Allen: Huh?

Matthew: A mighty fine one that's for sure

Allen: Yeah I'm proud of it, proud of the kids for what they've done and all that they've accomplished and that yep. It's been a good life.

Pam: He just wished he had a boy to help him out.

Allen: Oh I've got son in laws and they help me out, yep they help me out.